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ABSTRACT

Alabama's Commission on Higher Education has the statutory responsibility for overall statewide planning and coordination of higher education in Alabama, the administration of various student aid programs, and the performance of designated regulatory functions. This annual report from the Commission includes: (1) a list and photographs of the commissioners; (2) a message from the chairman; (2) a message from the executive director; (3) highlights of legislative activity and academic activity (including discussion of new academic programs, new program approval guidelines, role matrices, program viability, an experimental program to stimulate competitive research, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program, the Articulation and General Studies Committee, non-resident institutional review, the faculty database, the student database, the Southern Regional Electronic Campus, the Seventh Quadrennial Evaluation of the Commission, and the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries); (4) a report on Southern Regional Education Board activities; (5) highlights of financial aid activities; and (6) the 2000 Commission meeting calendar. (EV)

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ED 446 632

Annual Report

October 1, 1998 - September 30, 1999

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Alabama Commission on Higher Education
100 North Union Street
P.O. Box 302000
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2000

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1998-99 Annual Report
Alabama Commission on Higher Education

100 North Union Street
P.O. Box 302000
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2000

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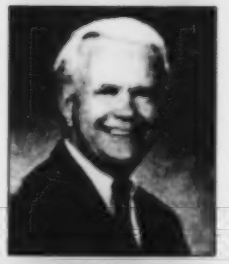

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Message from the Chairman

As chairman of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, I am pleased to transmit to Governor Siegelman and to the Alabama Legislature the 1998-99 annual report.

The Commission on Higher Education has the statutory responsibility for the overall statewide planning and coordination of higher education in Alabama, the administration of various student aid programs, and the performance of designated regulatory functions. Some of the more noteworthy of the Commission's statutory responsibilities include the approval of new academic programs at public two-year and four-year institutions, the submission each year of a funding recommendation to the Governor and the Legislature on behalf of the public higher education institutions, and the approval of off-campus offerings of public two-year and four-year institutions.

During the next year, the Commission will explore forging cooperative approaches and policy changes that will be applicable to the 21st century. New initiatives and the continuation of the legislation passed in 1996 will play major roles in improving the management of Alabama's public higher education.

We look forward to working with Governor Siegelman, the members of the Legislature, the institutions, and Alabama citizens to ensure our state's growth in the field of education.

Fournier J. "Boots" Gale

Report from the Executive Director

Continuing a theme begun in last year's annual report, the 1998-99 annual report highlights the Commission's activities related not only to the Higher Education legislation of 1996, but also the Commission's state plan for higher education. Adopted in October 1996, *Enhancing Our Strengths Through a Shared Vision: Planning for Alabama Higher Education 1996-2000* acknowledges a "shared-power environment" of governance structures, state-level coordination, and legislative participation in issue resolution. The plan identified the following strategic issues.

Strategic Issue 1: In what ways can Alabama higher education demonstrate educational and financial accountability?

Strategic Issue 2: How can Alabama higher education efficiently and effectively respond to demands for educational needs and services?

Strategic Issue 3: How can Alabama higher education identify and address access, completion, and equity issues?

Many of the Commission's projects and activities are in response to these questions. Ongoing projects such as the Minority Doctoral Scholars Program and the work of the Articulation and General Studies Committee tackle the issues of access, completion and equity. The implementation of Act 96-557, Program Viability, provides avenues for demonstrating accountability and for responding to demands for efficiency and effectiveness. Through carrying out its statutory responsibilities of approval of new units of instruction, new program approval, and the review of off-campus offerings, the Commission again promotes efficiency, accountability and effectiveness. This report will provide details of these and other activities that are tied directly to the state plan for higher education.

Henry J. Hector

The Seventh Quadrennial Evaluation Committee found that "to compete, Alabama must raise the education attainment of its population and the quality of its workforce." The report referred to "low aspiration for further education among large segments of the population" and concluded that the Commission must make a decision transition from its past role of containing, con-

trolling, and regulating, to a new role of providing statewide policy leadership and serving as a catalyst for system and institutional change.

Many students who enter our colleges and universities are not academically prepared for college level education. A high percentage of students find it necessary to take developmental or remedial studies, and many of them drop out before graduating. Recent studies indicate the more remedial courses a student finds it necessary to take, the less likely she/he is to ever attain a baccalaureate degree.

The Commission is proposing two programs that would focus on various aspects of readiness for college. They are *College Links to Insure Competitive Knowledge* and *Institutes for College Awareness and Readiness*.

The purpose of the Links program is to increase the number of students meeting the high school graduation standards, decrease the need for remedial education in colleges and universities and help students prepare for the 21st century. This program would provide enhanced instruction and mentoring to students in elementary school. It also would provide opportunities for college students, particularly those in the field of education, to practice teaching skills, to provide a community service and to earn money in a minimum wage, part-time job.

The Awareness program would link public two-year and four-year institutions with high schools and middle schools within commuting distance to create summer institutes for students who need help in their progress toward college readiness. The focus would not be on students who fail courses and find it necessary to go to summer school to repeat the courses. Rather, it would be on students who demonstrate the ability to succeed in college but are making marginal progress in their studies or simply lack the motivation to do well and go on to higher education.

The Commission is continuing to explore the use of technology in the delivery of higher education and in providing related resources. The coordination of the Commission with the Southern Regional Education Board has led to Alabama's participation as one of 16 states in the Southern Regional Electronic Campus. A $3 million appropriation in the 1999 session funded the Alabama Virtual Library – a resource that is allowing K-12 and college students in the state to have current, reliable information from books, magazines, almanacs and other information databases. The Commission will continue to work with Alabama institutions on strategies to aid participation in a technology-based environment.

Highlights of Legislative Activity

FY 1999-2000 Education Trust Fund

Act 99-434, the Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget bill was signed into law by Governor Don Siegelman on June 11, 1999. Act 99-434, along with other ETF budget allocations appropriated more than $4.1 billion.

FY 1999-2000 Funding for Higher Education

Higher Education's share of the Education Trust Fund amounted to $1,094,838,829 or 26.5 percent. K-12 received 68.4 percent and allocations for other ETF items accounted for the remaining 5.1 percent.

The senior institutions received an increase of $45,921,891 or 5.51 percent. Two-year institutions received an increase of $12,353,410 or 6.11 percent.

FY 1999-2000 Funding for the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education received an increase of $283,924 in the FY 1999-2000 Education Trust Fund bill. However, the unfunded mandated eight percent pay raise for state employees in the prior fiscal year and the increase in retirement costs used up the increase.

Increases in funding were given to only three of the programs ACHE administers. The Articulation Program received an additional $100,000 to continue the program enhancement. The Southern Regional Education Board received an additional $114,175 to cover increased costs and increase the number of minority doctoral scholarships. The Alabama Educational Grant Program received an additional $286,460 for student tuition equalization grants.

Highlights of Academic Activity

New Academic Programs

The following new academic programs were approved during fiscal year 1998-99:

Auburn University	M.L.Arch. in Landscape Architecture
University of Alabama	M.S.N. in Nursing
University of Montevallo	B.S. in History
University of North Alabama	M.A. in English
University of South Alabama	B.S. in Meteorology
	M.H.S.A. in Health Services Administration
Bishop State Community College	A.A.S., C. in Graphics Communications Technology
Central Alabama Community College	A.A.S., C. in Emergency Medical Services
Southern Union Community College	A.A.S. in Computer Science

New Program Approval Guidelines

On August 20, 1999, the Commission approved "Proposed Changes in the Guidelines for the Evaluation and Review of New Programs of Instruction Proposed by the Universities and the Two-Year Colleges." The impetus for these changes was twofold. The staff initially suggested that the program review procedures be streamlined and that greater emphasis be placed on institutional and governing board accountability for achieving the objectives described in the program proposals. Additionally, the Seventh Quadrennial Evaluation Committee recommended that the Commission "develop a new generation of quality assurance policies" which would place less emphasis on resource requirements of new programs and more emphasis on performance expectations. The Committee also suggested that the evaluation, approval and review of programs be streamlined and made more flexible without the loss of quality.

Role Matrices

Instructional role matrices provide the parameters for new academic program development within the context of the state-level higher education system by defining the fields of study and degree levels appropriate for academic program offerings for each institution. In order for institutions to propose a new academic program to the Commission, a role must first be approved in the program area.

Beginning in December 1995, the Commission adopted instructional role matrices for each institution for the five-year period 1996 through 2000. However, the Commission does have a policy for evaluating role change requests at any time based on two criteria: institutional readiness and role duplication. From October 1, 1998 to September 30, 1999, the Commission approved one role change request based on these criteria:

- The University of Alabama - On August 20, 1999, the Commission approved the addition of an "X" at the master's level at Line 28, Academic Subdivision Grouping, "Health Sciences, Other." This change allowed The University of Alabama to move an existing program to a different CIP code which more accurately reflected the content of the program.

Other role changes at Troy State University Montgomery, Troy State University Dothan, University of Montevallo, The University of Alabama at Huntsville, and Alabama A&M University were made as a result of program deletions during the year.

Program Viability

In May 1996, the Alabama Legislature adopted a series of bills related to higher education. Act 96-557 became known as the "program viability" legislation because it set minimum standards of productivity each academic program had to meet. Any program not meeting the minimum standards would be placed on a three-year monitoring cycle. According to the law, if a non-viable program does not meet the standard at the end of the three-year monitoring period, the institution will either submit a waiver request to the Commission or place the program on a maximum three-year phase-out. If a waiver request is not approved by the Commission, the non-viable program will be phased out over a maximum three-year period. As part of its rule making authority, the Commission also elected to allow core liberal arts programs an extra three years to meet the viability standards, with the full expectation that creative and innovative strategies would be implemented to enable those programs to meet the standards.

From October 1998-September 1999, Commission accomplishments related to program viability included:

- The Commission adopted the viability report on December 11, 1998 which provided a list of all viable and non-viable programs for each institution. For a copy of the report, refer to "Current Projects" on www.ache.state.al.us.
- On May 25, 1999, the Commission distributed the first annual report on program viability which includes data for the first of three monitoring years of non-viable programs. This report was distributed to the

Governor, the Legislature, the Boards of Trustees, the State Board of Education, and all presidents and chancellors of public institutions.

- The Commission received data for the second annual report on program viability. This data included the 1998-99 IPEDS completions survey data, double majors data, and voc/tech certifications data in October 1999.
- Also in October 1999, the Commission accepted the first interim reports on non-viable core liberal arts programs. These reports highlighted the strategies institutions have implemented to improve the productivity of liberal arts programs in four areas: curriculum, recruitment, retention, and resources. Additionally, the reports documented that . . .
    - Many non-viable liberal arts programs already have experienced an increase in productivity, approximately one-half of which expect to meet the baccalaureate viability standard within the next few years.
    - A few non-viable liberal arts programs, primarily in the fields of physics, philosophy, theater, and music, do not expect to meet the standard at the end of the three-year monitoring period, even after implementing strategies to improve productivity.
    - Only two non-viable liberal arts programs have been deleted or planned for deletion.
    - Approximately 25 non-viable liberal arts programs already have Commission approval for merger or consolidation or will be making application to the Commission to do so in the next year.
    - In a few cases, institutions have made minimal effort to improve the productivity of their non-viable liberal arts programs, but in most cases, significant initiatives to improve quality and productivity of programs have been implemented.
    - The statewide articulation agreement has had an impact on curriculum revision in liberal arts programs. Some of the reports indicated that due to the statewide articulation project, the total hours required for completing the liberal arts program has been reduced to 128 semester hours and that a higher percentage of courses now are accepted for transfer. These changes are expected to increase the number of transfers from community and junior colleges, and consequently, the number of graduates in the discipline.
    - While several institutions have explored the possibility of using distance technology in their programs, the results of this effort have not been all positive. In programs where a large percentage of courses have labs, institutions have found that many lab courses do not adapt well to distance technologies. Even when distance technology is an appropriate delivery mechanism, institutions are finding usage barriers. Those include the costs of purchasing and operating equipment, keeping equipment current, costs of teaching faculty and staff how to use the technology in offering a course, and the costs of actually converting a course to the technology. As a result, in some cases, distance technology may actually be more costly than traditional modes of instruction and less effective.

Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research

The Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) is a family of competitive, merit-based programs sponsored in Alabama by the state and by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense, and the Environmental Protection Agency. These programs are a federal-state-industrial partnership formed to enhance the science and engineering research, education and technology capabilities of Alabama. Cooperating partners in the Alabama EPSCoR include 15 Alabama colleges and universities, 40 committed industrial partners, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. The EPSCoR includes an impressive group of projects that are multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary collaborations addressing major problems tied to Alabama's economic development and environmental preservation. The operating principles of the Alabama EPSCoR are to support projects that address the special needs of Alabama and which contribute to the statewide development of scientific and engineering capabilities.

During 1999, federal agencies supported Alabama EPSCoR activities by awarding a total of more than $3.7 million in awards that entailed non-federal fund matching requirements in excess of $4 million. More than 400 faculty members, students, and staff from Alabama's seven research universities participated in an impressive group of projects. These included the "Internet2" and "Optoelectronics" projects funded by the NSF that will bring Alabama universities to the forefront in information science and technology.

The success of the Alabama EPSCoR has been noted by the NSF in the following statement:

"... the Alabama EPSCoR community should feel very positive about how your efforts are perceived here at NSF. We tend to use Alabama EPSCoR as an example of good research management, excellent research, and effective leadership..."

Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers grants authorized under the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program (PL 103-382). The intent of the program is to improve the teaching of core subjects, especially mathematics and science, in elementary and secondary schools.

Grants are awarded to post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations on a competitive basis for professional development projects offered to teachers to improve their teaching proficiency, reinforce their subject area knowledge and provide them materials necessary to meet project objectives. The appropriation to the Commission in FY 1998 was $826,829.

Nine (9) projects were approved: Alabama Institute for Education in the Arts for a project by the same name; The University of Alabama for three (3) pro-

jects: "Integrated Science", "Energy Literacy: Teaching the Alabama Course of Study's Energy Theme", and "Quantitative Literacy"; the University of Alabama at Birmingham for two (2) projects: "Hands-On Activity Science Program (HASP)" and the "Alabama Reading Initiative Evaluation." The University of Alabama in Huntsville was the recipient of three (3) awards for the following projects: "Alabama Supercomputing Program to Inspire computational Research in Education (ASPIRE)", "Teaching the Future: Space Exploration and the Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education in Alabama Schools", and the "Alabama Classroom Enhancement Project (ACE)."

Articulation and General Studies Committee

The Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) was established by Act 94-202 in March 1994. The legislation called for: 1) the Committee to develop a statewide general studies curriculum no later than September 1, 1998; 2) develop and adopt an articulation agreement by September 1, 1999 for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education in Alabama; 3) examine the need for a uniform course numbering system, course titles, and course descriptions; and 4) resolve problems in the administration or interpretation of the articulation agreement of the general studies curriculum. Membership of the Committee is determined by statute. Chair of the Committee is Dr. Ed Roach, President of the University of West Alabama. Vice Chair/Chair-Elect is Dr. Rod Britt, Dean of the Academic Division of Southern Union State Community College. The Executive Director of the Commission serves as an ex-officio member of the Committee.

Major accomplishments to date include the following: 1) Credit hour distribution requirements for freshmen and sophomore-level general studies curriculum at all public, post-secondary institutions in the state have been established; 2) A fair balance between the general studies requirements (Areas I-IV) and the pre-professional/pre-major studies which comprise the 64 semester credit hours of the statewide general studies curriculum was achieved; 3) Nineteen (19) discipline committees and one interdisciplinary/honors/innovative courses discipline committee were established which are responsible for developing course specifications and reviewing courses that are submitted for approval to the AGSC; 4) Enhanced discipline committees were created for all degree programs in the state and tasked with developing course templates for Area V of the AGSC approved general studies curriculum; and 5) The Statewide Articulation and Reporting System (STARS) office was assigned administrative responsibilities associated with the work of the AGSC. They included processing the work of the discipline committees, providing technical support to the institutions, developing forms, manuals, guidelines, and procedures for the implementation of general studies curriculum, and the establishment of a web page.
Implementation of Areas I-IV for first-time entering freshmen was effective Fall 1998. The "articulation agreement " which, in essence, is the entire program (approved courses, templates, transfer agreement, etc.) was implemented in September 1999. The web site address is http://stars.troyst.edu/AGSC.

Non-Resident Institutional Review

The Commission is responsible for the programmatic review of private institutions operating as foreign corporations in Alabama. These institutions include post-secondary public and private, profit and non-profit colleges and universities whose main campus or headquarters is located outside the state of Alabama.

Twenty-four (24) non-resident, non-profit and proprietary institutions/corporations were licensed by the State Department of Education to operate in Alabama during calendar year 1999 as compared with 22 in 1998. Six (6) of those licensed have no physical sites in the state but solicit students for out-of-state programs through agents. The remainder offered programs at 22 locations throughout Alabama.

Of the 18 institutions/corporations operating at physical sites, 10 were reviewed in accordance with ACHE criteria and approved to offer programs at 17 locations. The remaining eight, operating at nine sites throughout the state, were exempt from Commission review for reasons of Alabama incorporation, program duration or purpose of offering, such as those offered by business for employees.

The Commission's review criteria and procedures are designed to measure the quality of the offerings at each site through an evaluation of curriculum, attendance policies, admission requirements, faculty qualifications, administrative procedures, placement rate of graduates and the marketing of programs. Reviews are conducted annually and include a site visit. All programs approved by the Commission for continuation during this year were accredited by regional or national accrediting agencies. An inventory of non-resident institutions may be accessed through the Commission's web site: www.ache.state.al.us.

Faculty Database

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Act 96-771 requires the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) "...to establish a uniform electronic faculty unit record system for the purpose of obtaining information on faculty work loads at two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education in the state."

PARTICIPANTS

The Higher Education Information Advisory Group (HEIAG) Steering Committee has been recognized as the advisory committee referenced in Act 96-771. This group has been charged with the responsibility to provide consultation and advice on database development and report generation for this project. It includes representatives from two-year and four-year public institutions and the Department of Postsecondary Education. In addition to this advisory group, members from faculty leadership at institutions are also participating in the process.

ACTIVITIES

Commission Staff and the HEIAG Steering Committee reviewed the pilot project for SREB's survey on Faculty Teaching Load to determine if it will meet

the requirements of Act 96-771. The survey did not meet the necessary requirements since it was not a unit record system. The components may be incorporated into the database proposal so that we may also comply to the SREB survey if the pilot becomes a standard.

Staff and the HEIAG committee have developed a proposed draft that has been used as a tool to gather advice and suggestions from all groups to be affected by faculty reporting. Staff has met with members of the Faculty Senate, Council of Academic Officers and Instructional Officers for the two-year institutions to discuss the draft and encourage participation in the process of developing reports and data elements to be collected.

A draft of the data elements to be collected will be presented at the June Commission meeting for approval. After approval, staff will move into the implementation phase of the Faculty Database.

Student Database

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Act 96-509 requires the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) "...to obtain specific information from each two-year and four-year public institution of higher education to establish a student unit record data system." It requires generation of at least four reports: High School report, Out-of-State Students report, Student Transfer report and a report on Retention and Graduation.

OBJECTIVES

Two primary objectives have been identified for this project:

1. To collect reliable and comparable student information from all public post-secondary education institutions in Alabama.
2. To provide reliable, meaningful and timely information pertinent to the formulation of decisions and recommendations made by ACHE.

PARTICIPANTS

The Higher Education Information Advisory Group (HEIAG) Steering Committee has been recognized as the advisory committee referenced in Act 96-509. It includes representatives from two-year and four-year public institutions. Other participants working on this project have included staff from ACHE, the Department of Postsecondary Education and the State Department of Education.

ACTIVITIES

Activities during the past year:

1. All two-year and four-year public institutions submitted production data on their students for Fall, Winter and Spring terms.
2. An average of 99.9% of all student records received from the institutions was acceptable and has been included in the Statewide Student Database. Institutions had an opportunity to resubmit data or correct exceptions each term.
3. Data was received electronically from all institutions.
4. Summary reports and exception reports were sent back to institutions

electronically each term after processing.

5. All information regarding this project is posted on ACHE's web site at www.ache.state.al.us.
6. The Tuition and Residency Report was released using Fall 1998-99 data providing information on Out-of-State Students.
7. Sample Student Transfer Reports are being reviewed by the HEIAG Committee.
8. A workshop was held at ACHE with institutional representatives during June.
9. New Grade Point Average (GPA) fields were added to the file layout for data collection during 1999-2000. These GPA fields will be used for reporting back to State School Superintendent Ed Richardson in the High School Report.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1. The first High School Report should be sent to Dr. Richardson during October 1999.
2. Processing of Summer term data should be completed during December 1999.
3. The deadline for submission of Fall 1999-2000 data is February 15, 2000.

Southern Regional Electronic Campus

The Electronic Campus (EC), begun in 1998, is a project of the Southern Regional Education Board and its member states. The purpose of the EC is to provide students with a central point of reference, giving students easier access to quality programs and courses at two-year and four-year institutions across the south.

The EC helps students find and enroll in high quality courses at colleges and universities in the SREB states. Participating colleges and universities are required to establish and maintain a web page describing their participation in the EC, listing certified programs and courses, and providing links to information for prospective students.

Participation by Alabama institutions continued to grow in the past year. Twenty-one public and private institutions offered a total of over 250 courses and nine academic programs through the EC.

In July the Commission on Higher Education sponsored an Electronic Campus workshop at Auburn University at Montgomery. The workshop was intended to provide information on the requirements for participating in the EC, as well as instruction on entering courses and programs into the EC website. Mary Larson of the SREB staff was the primary speaker for the workshop. Over 70 persons attended the meeting, including representatives from two-year and four-year institutions, both public and private. Participants included academic administrators, instructors, and campus technology directors.

The Report of the Seventh Quadrennial Evaluation

The report of the Seventh Quadrennial Evaluation of the Commission was

presented to the Commission in February. The Evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of a requirement of the Commission statute, which charges that "the Commission shall appoint a committee of at least three consultants who are not associated with higher education in the state to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the Commission and to recommend changes as needed." Following the presentation to the Commission, the report was distributed to the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, members of the Legislature, the State Board of Education, and to representatives of the academic and business communities.

Dr. Aims C. McGuinness, Jr., senior associate, The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) served as chair of the committee and writer of the report. Dr. Karen A. Bowyer, president, Dyersburg State Community College in Tennessee, represented the two-year college sector. The Commission chose Dr. John T. Wolfe, Jr., for his experience as a four-year college president and a staff member of the Georgia Board of Regents. Dr. William B. Keller, executive director of the Alabama Press Association, was selected as the lay member of the committee, for the benefit of adding an in-state perspective.

Following the acceptance of the report by the Commission, the staff began work on several initiatives related to the committee's recommendations. One such initiative was a revision of review procedures for new academic program proposals to emphasize peer review and outcomes assessment. Two projects are being developed to address college readiness. One is a tutorial program for elementary students. The other provides summer institutes for middle school students on college campuses.

Network of Alabama Academic Libraries

For several years, the first priority of the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL) has been achieving funding for the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL). The Alabama Legislature funded the AVL for FY2000. This delivers information services for education to core information resources supporting instruction, research, and lifelong learning. It assures that all students, regardless of where they live in Alabama or where they attend school, will have access to the basic information needed for instruction.

The AVL is built on the long tradition of collaboration that is the hallmark of NAAL. As early as 1989, NAAL members recognized that emerging online technology would change forever the way education could be delivered. NAAL initiated a meeting with the Alabama Supercomputer Authority to explore how best to assure desktop access to critical information resources using the Internet. From this initial meeting, an expanding partnership supporting the AVL grew to include the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Alabama Department of Education, Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education, and Alabama Public Library Service.

NAAL's effort to strengthen partnerships among the education sectors and develop support for the concept of a statewide access to online information resulted in funding for the AVL. FY2000 funds were appropriated for the state-level education agencies to implement the AVL for their constituents: NAAL, K-12 public school systems, two-year colleges, and public libraries. The Alabama Supercomputer Authority provides technological support for the task of delivering information services statewide. The AVL can be visited online at www.avl.lib.al.us.

NAAL's experience in evaluating and negotiating subscriptions for shared online databases has been invaluable. Because members of NAAL have extensive experience with online resources, academic librarians are assisting the State Department of Education with training in K-12 schools. A list of NAAL training contacts has been distributed to school systems to facilitate scheduling training programs in schools. NAAL libraries are also scheduling training sessions in their own computer labs.

The AVL is a milestone in the history of funding for education initiatives. By all accounts, this is the first unified education project supported unanimously by all education sectors. The Alabama Legislature acknowledged the strength of this cooperative initiative by appropriating first year full funding request of $3 million.

NAAL members must provide information resources supporting graduate education and research which are beyond the initial scope of the AVL. A major effort of NAAL has been obtaining group discounts to achieve savings and to increase access to online information for all NAAL members. As a result of this effort, the senior institutions are all able to offer a wide array of online information databases. NAAL funds subsidize the cost of three databases: *Expanded Academic ASAP* (an index with full text of over 1,000 journals), the Modern Language Association's *International Bibliography* and the American Psychological Association's *PsycInfo*. These add upper division resources to the AVL core. Individual NAAL members participate in a variety of the group licenses negotiated by NAAL.

Another NAAL initiative was sponsoring continuing education programs to assure that member libraries provide effective and efficient information services. A continuing education program provided training in using new technologies to deliver library services, expanding subject knowledge using the Internet for reference services, and strengthening training skills to support the AVL training needs. Again, NAAL demonstrated the value of collaboration as member librarians served as workshop presenters and libraries volunteered use of their classrooms and computer labs. NAAL contracted for several national training programs, and achieved savings for its members over the cost of individual registrations.

Report on SREB Activities

ACHE/SREB Minority Doctoral Scholars Program

This year (1998-99) marked the sixth year that Alabama participated in the ACHE/SREB Minority Doctoral Scholars Program. During that time, participation grew from two to 30. The program is designed to increase minority representation among faculty and staff at Alabama public colleges and universities. It also is a part of a national faculty diversity compact that includes 38 states in the SREB, New England and Western regional education boards.

A significant feature of the program is the support provided by the state and the universities. Universities provide tuition-remission grants for three years and additional assistance beyond that time if it is needed. Auburn University, The University of Alabama, The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Troy State University, and University of South Alabama are among the 50 universities in the region supporting the Minority Doctoral Scholars Program.

Annually, there is an institute on teaching and mentoring. The institute gives scholars the opportunity to learn and share tips for success in graduate school. They also work with their faculty advisors and meet faculty from around the nation who have overcome challenges the scholars now face.

Off-Campus Activities

In 1998, institutions began using new Guidelines for the Approval of Off-Campus Instruction. The new guidelines are designed to provide institutions with greater flexibility and less paper work. However, the guidelines still require standards of quality and accountability. To this end, ACHE criteria are consistent with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/ Commission on Colleges (SACS/COC) criteria.

Among the major changes are:

1. Exempt sites now include business and industry sites where courses are taught exclusively for employees at the sites.
2. Off-campus proposals may now be submitted to the Commission at anytime provided they are sent at least six weeks prior to the Commission meeting in which they are to be considered.
3. Once a site is approved, it does not require approval in subsequent years. However, approval is required for any course or program additions at currently approved sites.

4. Courses taught at an institution's main campus and delivered to remote sites via various distance technologies will not be subject to ACHE review and approval.

Using the new Guidelines, 11 four-year institutions received Commission approval to offer off-campus instruction at 39 sites. This includes 31 continuing sites and the eight new sites that were approved for this academic year. While not subject to approval, four-year institutions also reported 10 distance learning sites. During 1997-98, 33 four-year off-campus sites were approved. Prior to that year, the Commission approved 29 sites for 11 four-year institutions.

Significant Changes

Distance Learning

Distance learning sites represents one of the significant changes. The new guidelines give the institutions an opportunity to formally apprise the Commission of their distance learning activities. Some highlights are listed below:

Alabama A&M University has established five distance learning sites. The purpose is to provide certification courses for teachers of Trade/Technical and Health and Science Technology subjects in Career/Technical Education programs for grades seven - 11. The extent to which Alabama A&M University is responding to the State Department of Education's certification mandate is demonstrated by the fact that the Snead State Community College site had 53 students enrolled in two academic/transfer courses.

Jacksonville State University has established two distance learning sites to offer core courses for Master's programs in teacher education. Also, a limited number of upper-division courses will be offered if circumstances permit.

Upon the request of SREB, Alabama and other states have studied the feasibility of participating in a pilot program to expand the inclusion of distance learning programs during the 2000-2001 academic year.

Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit

During 1997-98, the State Board of Education approved the dual enrollment/dual credit program that enables school students to earn high school credits while taking college-approved courses. The students represent a highly selective group. Most are graduating seniors with B+ averages and they have been preselected by the principals and teachers for the courses.

For 1998-99 the two dual enrollment/dual credit sites at Jacksonville State University proved to be very popular. HY 201 and HY 202 were at Saks High School with 32 students in each class. HY 101 was offered at Jacksonville High School and 22 students enrolled. An important consideration for the students was their choice to enroll in these courses in preference to advanced placement courses.

Transferal of Courses

Courses normally offered by Jacksonville State University at the Fort McClellan Base were transferred to Oxford High School. The transfer was made because the U. S. Department of Defense ordered the closing of Fort McClellan.

Academic Common Market

Alabama and 14 other states participate in the Academic Common Market (ACM). The program is designed to enable students to enroll in out-of-state programs at in-state tuition rates, provided the programs are not offered in their states. Coordinated by SREB, it has grown from 89 students in 1975 to approximately 2000 during 1998-99.

Because of some unique programs at Auburn University that are not offered in some states, Auburn was one of the leading institutions in attracting students. It ranked second in the number of ACM students with 161. Middle Tennessee State University enrolled 248 students. Other states with large enrollments were Virginia Tech - 157 and the University of Southern Mississippi - 117.

During 1998-99, 120 Alabama residents enrolled in out-of-state institutions via the ACM. In 1997-98, 115 Alabama residents enrolled in out-of-state programs. The previous year's participation was 102.

Some Alabama residents have been able to reduce their college expenses by as much as $10,000 a year (or $40,000 for a four-year period of study) through the ACM.

Another example of how Alabama residents benefit from the ACM is reflected in their access to highly specialized programs. For example, Alabama residents enrolled in a model distance learning program, the Bachelor of Professional Studies in Fire Service Administration at the University of Memphis. University of Memphis is the regional center for the "Degrees at a Distance" for Open Learning Fire Service (OLFS), serving fire service personnel in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee. OLFS is a degree completion program, offering upper division courses in Fire Administration and Fire Prevention Technology. These courses are designed for independent study. Freshman and sophomore courses, electives, and other courses related to the fire service are taken at a college near the student's residence.

SREB Contract Programs

Alabama has SREB contract programs with institutions for dentistry, medicine, optometry, osteopathic medicine, and veterinary medicine. Meharry Medical College has contracts in dentistry and medicine. Last year, 14 Alabama residents were in medical and four were in dental education. Alabama has a con-

tract with West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. Each year the state supports four residents who pay the in-state tuition.

Sixty students from Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia attended the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry. Auburn University enrolled 120 Kentucky residents for the Veterinary Medicine program. Tuskegee University's Veterinary Medicine enrolled 40 students from Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina and West Virginia.

Highlights of Financial Aid Activities

In the Commission's plan, *Enhancing Our Strengths Through a Shared Vision*, one strategy calls for decreasing students' dependence on loans to meet their educational costs, particularly during the first two years of college-level study. This strategy is intended to address issues of access, completion and equity in Alabama higher education.

Twenty years ago, grants and loans represented 60 and 40 percent of total aid, respectively. As a result of declines in major federal and state grant programs, and dramatic increases in student and parent borrowing, grants now represent 40 percent of total federal, state and institutional aid, and loans 60 percent. Nationwide, student assistance has drifted from a grant-based to a loan-based system.

While federal loans are readily available at both public and private four-year colleges in the state, almost all of Alabama's public two-year colleges do not participate in either of the two major federal student loan programs.

A review of total student aid funds distributed to all undergraduates in the state provides further perspective on the issue of loan indebtedness. Total state spending on need-based student aid last year was $2,313,000 (less than .08% of the national level of $2,761 billion); total spending on non-need-based aid was $5,623,000 (.93% of the national total of $603 million).

Review of Programs

Alabama National Guard Educational Assistance Program

This program is designed to help professional members of the Alabama National Guard pursue undergraduate degrees and, to a limited extent, graduate degrees. This assistance is especially important as a component of the Military Department's recruitment efforts to maintain troop strength in Alabama.

During 1998-99, 1,008 awards were given at an average of $653 per award for a total distribution of $658,216.

Alabama Student Assistance Program

The Alabama Student Assistance Program is a state-supported and federally-funded grant program which is designed to assist financially-needy students. It is the state's only need-based student aid program for Alabama residents attending postsecondary educational institutions in Alabama.

During 1998-99, 4,251 awards were given at an average of $481 and a total distribution of $2,046,050.

Alabama Student Grant Program

Alabama residents enrolled in independent, nonprofit Alabama colleges and universities receive financial assistance through the Alabama Student Grant Program. This program helps bridge the differential between public and private institutions, and helps provide Alabama students an opportunity to take programs and courses at private institutions. Individual grant payments to students are significantly less than the state appropriation per student were these residents to attend public institutions in Alabama.

A strategy defined in *Enhancing Our Strengths Through a Shared Vision*, calls for the Legislature to fund the tuition assistance program for students attending private institutions of higher education at its maximum level. Alabama law allows eligible students at private higher education institutions to receive $1,200 per academic year.

The state of Alabama is not unique in providing assistance for students attending private institutions. Most states include private higher education in the student aid subsidy programs; and one-third of all states offer direct tuition equalization grants (student grants that offset the cost differences between public and private colleges) to students attending private institutions.

During 1998-99, 9,117 awards were given at an average of $609 each. Award distributions totaled $5,563,817.

Alabama Student Assistance Program

At the request of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education (ADPE), Commission staff returned to ADPE all records pertaining to the operation and management of the All Alabama Academic Teach Recognition Program which provides statewide recognition and stipends to both the first-team and second-team members at each of Alabama's public two-year colleges. ADPE had requested the Commission to administer these scholarship awards beginning with the 1996-97 academic year.

In addition to administering the program, without administrative costs to ADPE or institutions, the Commission filed program regulations with the Legislative Reference Service and issued payments to students in accordance with state procedures and regulations.

Appalachian Youth Scholarship Program

The Appalachian Youth Scholarship Program provides up to $1,500 per student per year to attend two-year and four-year institutions located in Alabama's Appalachian region. Each award must be matched with an equal scholarship or grant provided by the institution the student attends.

Program eligibility is limited to youth from the 35 Appalachian counties in Alabama. Priority is given to youth who live in the eight Alabama counties designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission as "distressed counties".

During 1998-99, 24 awards were given at an average of $1,417 per award for a total of $34,000. This year marked the third and final year of a three-year federal grant award.

Police Officer's/Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program

The Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program provides funds for tuition, fees, books and supply expenses for undergraduate study at Alabama public colleges and universities for dependents and spouses of police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty.

During 1998-99, 10 awards were given at an average of $2,903 per award, for a total distribution of $29,035.

State of Alabama Chiropractic Scholarship Program

This program provides scholarship assistance to financially-needy Alabama residents who are enrolled in accredited chiropractic colleges. It is the only type of assistance for Alabama students pursuing chiropractic studies.

During 1998-99, 18 awards were given at an average of $2,305, for a total distribution of $41,496.

Technology Scholarship Program for Alabama Teachers

The Technology Scholarship Program for Alabama Teachers (TSPAT) is the first program of its type in the country. The program, created by the Alabama Legislature in 1993, enables certified, public school teachers to take advanced technology training on state-paid scholarships. Teachers take three courses specifically designed to help teachers integrate technology into the school curriculum.

To date, nearly 12% of all public school teachers in Alabama have received technology training with TSPAT assistance. During 1998-99, 1,004 awards were given to K-12 teachers at an average award of $661. Awards totaled $664,093.

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

2000 Meeting Schedule

Thursday and Friday, February 10-11, 2000

Thursday and Friday, April 27-28, 2000

Thursday and Friday, June 15-16, 2000

Thursday and Friday, August 17-18, 2000

Thursday and Friday, October 5-6, 2000

Thursday and Friday, December 7-8, 2000